



## Why care?

- ▶ “Caring” leads to action
- ▶ *Caring enough to act* leads to intentional strategies and attention to outcomes that *matter*



## This we know . . .

- 1 Students matter.
- 2 Academic relationships matter to students.
- 3 Success leads to persistence.
- 4 Persistence leads to retention.

## Truths and Assumptions

- ▶ You represent a wide range of institutions, roles, and lenses (faculty, primary role advisors, administrators, staff, students, etc.)
- ▶ “Adult Learner” is a broad, multi-faceted term (not just 25 and older)

## Truths and Assumptions

- ▶ While “students are students,” there are few differences between the 18-year-old coming straight from high school and those who take a different path.
- ▶ You likely know more than I do about this. . .
- ▶ “Advising is Teaching”

## Advising as Teaching Paradigm

- Meaning-making
- Skill identification and development
- Critical thinking
- Sequences of experiences
- Learning strategies
- Scaffolding of knowledge, experiences, and transferable skills



## Advising Principles Mirror Effective Teaching Principles

- Knowledge is constructed, not received
- Mental models change slowly
- Questions are critical
- Caring is critical
  - *What the Best College Teachers Do* (Bain, 2004)

## Advising as Teaching and Learning

**Advisors teach students:**


- to value the learning process
- to apply decision-making strategies
- to put the college experience into perspective
- to set priorities and evaluate events
- to develop thinking and learning skills
- to make choices



## Definition of an Effective Advisor

“the excellent advisor helps the student to understand, and indeed in a certain sense, to **create the logic** of the student’s curriculum.”

*Marc Lowenstein, 2009*




### Critical Issues for Adult Learners

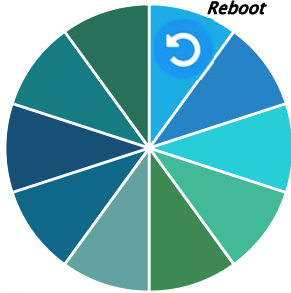

## OUR FRAMEWORK

- What are the issues?
- What does the research suggest?
- What are the implications for advising and guiding adult learners?





### Critical Issues for Adult Learners

*Reboot*

## What is the issue here?

*The DECISION to Initiate the Transition*


### What does the research suggest?

**Good news:**

- ▶ Adults *tend* to be more in control of the decision (Tokpah, et al., 2006)



**Challenges:**

- ▶ Adults are *usually* place-bound and have resources that are stretched (Duggan, 2015)

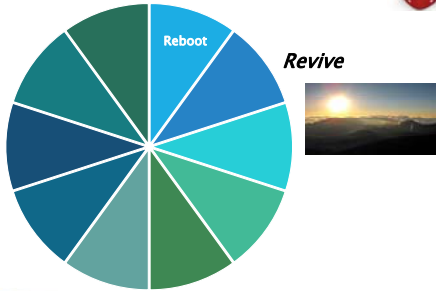



### What are the implications for advising?

- ▶ Stay up-to-date with the TN Reconnect website
- ▶ Work with connections in the community
- ▶ You are always representing higher education in your "worlds"






### Critical Issues for Adult Learners


### What are the issues here?

How strong is the traction?



### What does the research suggest?

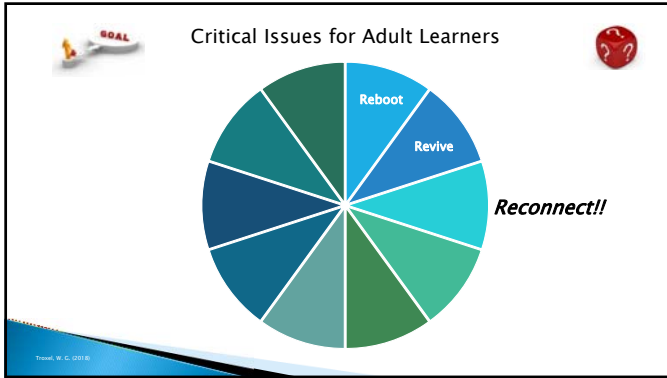
- ▶ **Warning:** Be careful when consulting the literature (undergrad vs. grad)
- ▶ Get to know decision-making and transition theory, for example:
  - Bean and Eaton (2002) - coping strategies; academic & social integ.
  - Briggs, Clark, & Hall (2012) - establishing learner identity
  - Bridges (2001) - transition model (between old and new "normal")
  - Risquez, Moore, & Morley (2008) - U-curve theory of adjustment
  - Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman (1995) - *a biggie*



### What are the implications for advising?



- ▶ Be careful of implicit and explicit messaging
- ▶ Be willing to engage with prospective students' stories (and listen for signs of transition)



What are the issues here?

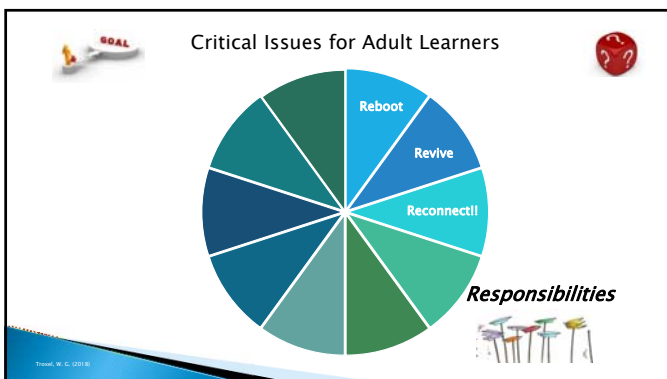
- ▶ BRAVO to you!!

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- What does the Research Suggest?
- ▶ Make it understandable
  - ▶ Make it affordable
  - ▶ Make it accessible
  - ▶ Make it relevant
  - ▶ Make it goal-oriented
  - ▶ Make it clear they're wanted
- (Duggen, 2015; Falasca, 2011; Ryan, et al., 2011)
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- What are the implications for advising?
- ▶ Answer every question like it's the first time
  - ▶ Listen well
    - **Acknowledge** their expertise and experiences, as well as their fears and concerns
    - Be fascinated by **their story** and make it a learning experience for you (they'll know the difference)
    - Uncover their conscious and subconscious **goals**
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What is the issue here?

“Jockeying for Position”



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## What does the Research Suggest?

- ▶ Good news:
  - Often have strong support
  - Experience with “overwhelmed and busy”
- ▶ Challenges:
  - Sometimes lack support
  - Multiple life roles make them “overwhelmed and busy”

(Diep, et al., 2016; Sogunro, 2015)

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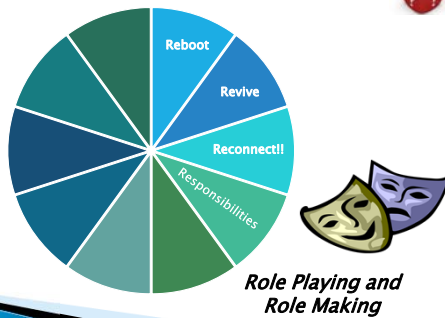
## What are the implications for advising?

- ▶ Multiple modalities for instruction & communication (don't assume they know tech well, though)
- ▶ Nurture their problem-solving expertise
- ▶ Help them find the threads (leads to support, resources, and meaning-making)



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## Critical Issues for Adult Learners



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## What are the issues here?

“Improv vs. Rehearsed”



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## What does the Research Suggest?

- ▶ Role Playing and Role Making (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Turner, 1978)
- ▶ Connections to past roles; both good and bad (Ryan, et al., 2011)
- ▶ Past experiences with education (Kasworm, 2003)

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## What are the implications for advising?

- ▶ Adult learners derive meaning in the classroom through a “renegotiation of both their understanding of collegiate knowledge and past understandings of the world” (Kasworm, 2003, 82)
- ▶ Inquire about their “influencers” (not just supporters)?
- ▶ Recognize important “identities”
- ▶ Nurture past successes and failures in goal-oriented ways

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**Critical Issues for Adult Learners**

**Responses**

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**What are the issues here?**

“Time” and “Relevance”

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**What does the Research Suggest?**

- ▶ “Time” is the adult learner’s greatest commodity
- ▶ “Relevance” is the adult learner’s most important expectation

(Troxel, 2018, in press)

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**What are the implications for advising?**

- ▶ Just as you would want: timely responses with accurate and helpful information
- ▶ Handoffs are seamless (human and the “behind the scenes humans”)

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**Critical Issues for Adult Learners**

**Ratios**

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**What’s the issue here?**


*How many advisors does it take . . . ?*

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What does the Research Suggest?

*"It Depends!!"*



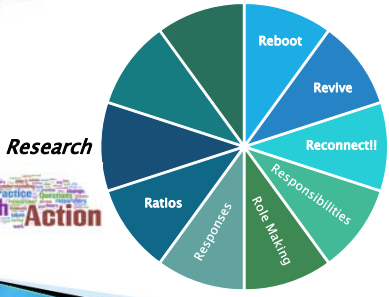
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What are the implications for advising?

- ▶ They don't care about OUR structural or budgetary challenges; they want assistance and support at the time *they* need assistance and support, from someone who cares.
- ▶ YOU (institution-level) determine the scope and nature of services and responsibilities to students

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Critical Issues for Adult Learners



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What is the issue here?


How do YOU approach your work?



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What does the Research Suggest?

*EXACTLY!!*



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What are the implications for advising?



CURIOUS HAT

- ▶ You'll be more effective as an academic advisor, and more energized as an educator if you approach your work in a scholarly way.

(Troxel, 2018, in press; McKinney, 2013)

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**Critical Issues for Adult Learners**

**Resources**

Reboot  
Revive  
Reconnect!!  
Responsibilities  
Role Making  
Responses  
Ratios  
Research

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**What are the issues here?**

*Just in Time*

“I didn’t know what I didn’t know”  
*or*  
“That’s not the way I was expected to do it before”

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**What does the Research Suggest?**

- ▶ Adult learners benefit from resources that are:
  - Available and accessible
  - Relevant
  - Creative and dynamic
  - Goal-responsive
  - Human (breathing) and Human (technology inspired by those who breathe)

(Stein, et al., 2011; Sogunto, 2015)

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**What are the implications for advising?**

- ▶ Watch out, again, for implicit and explicit messages

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**Critical Issues for Adult Learners**

**Belonging**

Reboot  
Revive  
Reconnect!!  
Responsibilities  
Role Making  
Responses  
Ratios  
Research  
Resources

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**What are the issues here?**

Sense of belonging is critical  
but  
“belonging” tends to come before “trust”

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### What does the Research Suggest?

- ▶ Norms of Reciprocity (Diep, et al., 2016)
- ▶ Social Interdependence Theory (Johnson & Johnson, 2005)
- ▶ Zone of Proximal Development (as applied to adult learners) (Taylor, et al., 2002)
- ▶ Student Engagement (as applied to adult learners) (Rabourn, et al., 2015)




### Adult Learners . . .

**BEAST  
MODE**  
ON

- ▶ Are motivated to succeed
- ▶ Take responsibility for their own learning
- ▶ Are usually aggressive and intentional toward their goals (career-oriented)


(Kenner & Weinerman, 2011; Varney & Peck, 2011)



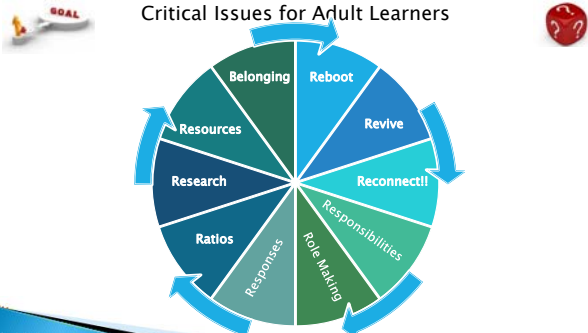
### What are the implications for advising?

- ▶ You have a LOT in common with these learners


I don't trust words,  
I trust actions!



### Critical Issues for Adult Learners




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### Back to “Advising as Teaching and Learning”

**If advising is teaching, treat it as such:**

- Develop a curriculum for advising
- Identify intended learning outcomes
- Identify learning activities (strategies) for attaining the outcomes
- Assess the gap between intended outcomes and actual outcomes
- And provide (support) professional development



### Big Picture Implications for Advisors

- Commit to Professional Development (whether you're required to or not)
- Listen to your students' stories
- Recognize their “seasonal identities”




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Advising Specific Populations | **Advising Adult Learners Advising Community** | Current Chair

**About Us**

The Advising Adult Learners Community serves advisors who spend a significant portion of their duties in serving adult students. Through the sharing of information and experience our community assists advisors of

**Advising Adult Learners Advising Community**

**Current Chair**

**About Us**

The Advising Adult Learners Community serves advisors who spend a significant portion of their duties in serving adult students. Through the sharing of information and experience our community assists advisors of adult learners to understand and address the unique needs of adult students. This community's network assists members in working directly with students and administrators to properly address the needs of adult students. The community works to advocate for the needs of adult learners in terms of providing: 1) support for their learning development; 2) service commitment for adults; 3) networking and community building opportunities; 4) strategies for dealing with financial and family responsibilities; and, 5) motivation to complete their programs.

The Advising Adult Learners Community provides and sponsors sessions at the national and local conferences, circulates a community newsletter, maintains a community website and has teams to share information. In addition, the community organizes business meetings and social gatherings for its members.

**Definition of the Adult Learner:**  
 "Any student, regardless of age, who has adult responsibilities beyond college classes, and for whom those adult responsibilities take priority in times of crisis."

**News & Updates**

**Important Information**



**"Plan Early and Plan Often"**

- ▶ Entire campus must build capacity, change practices, and implement the right tools
- ▶ Entire campus commits to culture change

Do we have your commitment?  
Oh, yes AND no.

**What is "success"?**

- ▶ Still illusive from an "evidence" standpoint

**"A classroom [and a campus] is a place where every possible variable is actively varying."**

(Barbara Woolvard)



**Get Different!**

**“We don’t need to change these students to make them more suitable for our institution; we need to adjust the way we traditionally do business to make education more accessible for our adult learners.”**

(Adapted from Riggs, 2018)

**NEXT!!!**

**WHEN YOU ENTER THIS OFFICE**

- YOU ARE RESPECTED
- YOU ARE VALUED
- YOU ARE HEARD
- YOU MATTER

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- ENCOURAGE QUESTIONS
- ENGAGE STUDENTS
- SUPPORT CRITICAL THOUGHT
- BOOST SPIRITS
- INSPIRE DREAMS
- CULTIVATE LEARNING

**I ADVISE**

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